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PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA · THE SENATE

SENATOR VICKI BOURNE
Australian Democrat Senator for New South Wales

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NEWS RELEASE

DEMOCRATS SUPPORT PLAN FOR EAST TIMORESE INDEPENDENCE

The Australian Democrats welcome the plan for reform in East Timor proposed at the United Nations by Jose Ramos-Horta of the National Council of Maubere Resistance.

Senator Vicki Bourne, Foreign Affairs Spokesperson for the Democrats said: "This plan would lead to a gradual lowering in tension; should greatly improve human rights for the East Timorese; and would culminate in a vote on independence.

"Some of the parties involved in the tragedy of East Timor seem too eager to dismiss this plan.

"In the absence of any other feasible proposal this agenda for reform should be given careful consideration by all parties, including the Australian Government.

"I congratulate Mr Ramos-Horta and the leader of the Resistance in East Timor, Mr Xanana Gusmao, on this practical agenda for improving human rights in East Timor.

"I urge the Australian Government to vigorously support this proposal, both at the United Nations and in our own region.

"Mr Keating has worked hard to improve Australia's relations with Indonesia. This proposal provides an excellent opportunity for him to use that relationship to help East Timor.

"The people of East Timor deserve no less."

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